

## BILL CHIS

He Says That Columbus Was After the Dust

NOT SO MUCH THE GREAT GLORY

But After All He Doesn't Want to Kick Him While He Is Banking on His Name.

It is now 400 years since a solitary human being has been seen riding between his own home and the rugged world of King Ferdinand, wrapped in thought. Four hundred years have sped away and a mighty nation, proud and arrogant, has arisen to do honor to that human and the courageous blunder which added a new world to civilization.



THE NOBLEMAN AT NYE'S HOUSE.

Reading carefully the biography of Columbus we find that no one in his age or generation could have been better fitted for the mighty job of opening up and booming a western world than Christopher Columbus, for he is said to have been one of the brightest young lions of his time. Columbus took preparation in the infancy, it is said, and put it on its feet and made an industry of it. "He had a talent of deceit," says his biographer, "and sometimes boasted of it, or at least counted it a merit."

And this is the gentleman whose name we give to the world's great exposition 400 years after he found us while looking for some one else! I hate to seem pessimistic or speak lightly of a great man. I believe that I should speak of Columbus with respect, as I would have wished him to refer to me if our places had been reversed; but oh, how sad it is to know that the land of Washington, George Washington, the man who would not be even about his circulation—that such a land, I say, should have been discovered by a liar who represented the pauper labor of Europe! This, I say, pains and grieves me.

The biographer of Columbus also produces good evidence to show that Chris was not by a long, long distance the pioneer in the theory of the earth's sphericity. It was an idea taught by the Pythagoreans in the Sixth century before Christ, which was, as the ready mathematicians will see at once, about 2,000 years before Christopher Columbus got his lunch put up for his great journey west. Two hundred years before Christ, Greece is said to have constructed a globe map over ten feet in diameter and offered it as a premium with his paper, so that even in the time of our bavior the sphericity of the earth was not a new thing. Religious matters of course engrossed the attention at that time so much that geography was yet in its infancy, but it was common talk in Jerusalem, especially on the west side, that the earth was round like a ball and composed of land and water.

Toscanelli had much to do with firing up Columbus to make the voyage of discovery. We hear very little of Toscanelli, and yet he taught Columbus that the earth was round like a ball and dotted at the poles. Toscanelli had figured out by means of logarithms and a piece of chalk that the circumference of the earth was 19,000 miles. This slight error of 7,000 miles, considering what disadvantages he had to deal with and also that one astronomer as late as the sixteenth century made an error of 3,000,000 miles in figuring out the distance of the earth from the sun, not even discovering the mistake till years afterward, when he accidentally peered off the distance out of curiosity—I say an error of 7,000 miles, at a time when there were so few bars upon which to make geometrical calculations, is not surprising.

Let us now pass on rapidly to speak of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, viewed in the light of more careful research by the biographer of Columbus. It is not too bad to learn, after years of faith and trust in Isabella, that she was really one of our coarsest and jayest of queens.

Oh, what can be sadder than to catch a crowned head in a mean act? What can be more depressing than to know that your favorite monarch is a chump or a jay? Oh, it is terrible! I never had but one such experience myself.

Our home used to be quite a rendezvous for people of this kind when I was a child. Wealthy nobles used to come to our house and bring their dinners with them. We were very popular with that set. When they came I slept with my parents. So did the other boys. I held these titled people in great esteem, and gave them my pie. But one day a duke who was at our place shooting grouse, game chickens and cows, sat at table and combed his red, red whiskers with his fork. That settled it with him. I could not respect him after that. He also put his teeth on the table while speaking of his ancestors. I hate that. A man who cannot speak freely of his ancestors without removing his teeth at Isabella is no friend of mine.

Isabella, it has been said, pawned her jewels that Columbus might go to the west and find a new world. The historian says she did not do that. So in the woman's department of the great exposition Isabella should not be permitted to hold the place which by rights Queen Victoria should hold. Victoria is very different from Isabella. She is upright as a search, and has never once stepped aside from the path of duty in order to gratify her own selfish wishes. She has put in her whole life hours per day reigning just the same as she would if that had told her to stand

behind a counter and rap on the show-case and call "cash" for the same number of years.

So the historian says that Queen Isabella, hoping for new realms to govern and for several new realms to govern on the return of Columbus, made him god-speed and made him sign a cart iron contract to turn over all his discoveries to her and Ferdinand. Then, believing that the great traveler would strike Asia, they gave him a letter of introduction to the khan of Tartary instead of a letter to Sitting Bull, as they should have done, and he set out.

He was to be commander of Long Island sound if he succeeded, and governor general of Conestable's Hook. He was, by contract, permitted to retain one-tenth of all gold, silver, pearls, precious stones and pelts found on the voyage after the costs had been deducted.

The biographer of Columbus tells us that the story about Isabella having pawned her jewels to fit out Columbus on his trip will not do at all. She and Ferdinand just simply cast an anchor to windward, hoping to get a controlling interest in the Standard Oil company before anybody else did so.

And so the story gradually comes down to the spinal column of lust for gold, not only on the part of his royal backers, but even Columbus and his crew were out for the dust and that alone. What a commonplace tale after our schoolboy wonder and admiration. Wherever Columbus landed he asked if gold existed there. If not, he assessed the natives so much cotton per head. When there was gold, it was a hawk's bill of this metal per man and a calash of gold per chief. The stupidity of the earth did not worry him so much as his own rotundity.

Finally Columbus got to lying again. He gave offices to his relatives, not only to his wife's family, but at last he got reckless and began to hand out offices to his numerous children. It was then time to call a halt, as the local Genoa papers so truly said, and when he offered to open up a slave trade between Spain and the Bahamas people lost faith in him. It is pretty well settled that Columbus drew the prize for first seeing land, when as a matter of fact one of his men was first to see it, and that he put the money into a watch with a peach stone charm on the chain.

Columbus had been dead 230 years before he learned that his discovery was not a part of Asia. We can imagine him now, as he rode along the Jersey coast, inquiring for the Ah Khoond of Swatt, to whom he had a letter from Ferdinand. I can see him now at the Potter building or the Mills building asking for the khan of Tartary, or trying to find his telephone number on a pink pamphlet at the ferry.

Yet we might as well give to Columbus the glory of this great discovery, whether he did it accidentally or from a mercenary point of view purely. We will let that go.

The time is ripe for celebration. Let us celebrate. When Columbus came here Patrick Henry had not even been surmised; Henry Clay had not been thought of. The application of electricity had not been dreamed of, and the pink tea was yet unborn. Oh, what strides have been made even in one century, and in 400 years the change has been most marvelous. The use of emulge at the time of the discovery of America was yet in its infancy. Lots of people did not know what it was. It is so even now.



STUDYING GOVERNMENT.

Religion was at that time in a rudimentary state. Now it is perfected and painless in its operations. Then religion was a calamity; now it is a blessing, and is rarely as fatal as it used to be.

Cooking has advanced with giant strides. Pie, both plain and engraved, has been introduced. The brevetted pie with monogram has taken the place of the early tart, which was not durable, and which yielded readily to the action of the stomach.

State-manship as a means of obtaining a livelihood has come to stay. The study of government is beginning to interest the scholarly, while those who are not scholarly continue to scoop in the votes and do the grooving.

Whether Columbus discovered this country on purpose or not, the writer of these lines is much obliged to him. Whether he did it for revenue only or for the advancement of civilization, his courage is worthy our respect and esteem, and it is my own earnest wish that his little episode in honor of his four hundredth anniversary may score a success, as the dramatic critics sometimes say.

Bill Kye

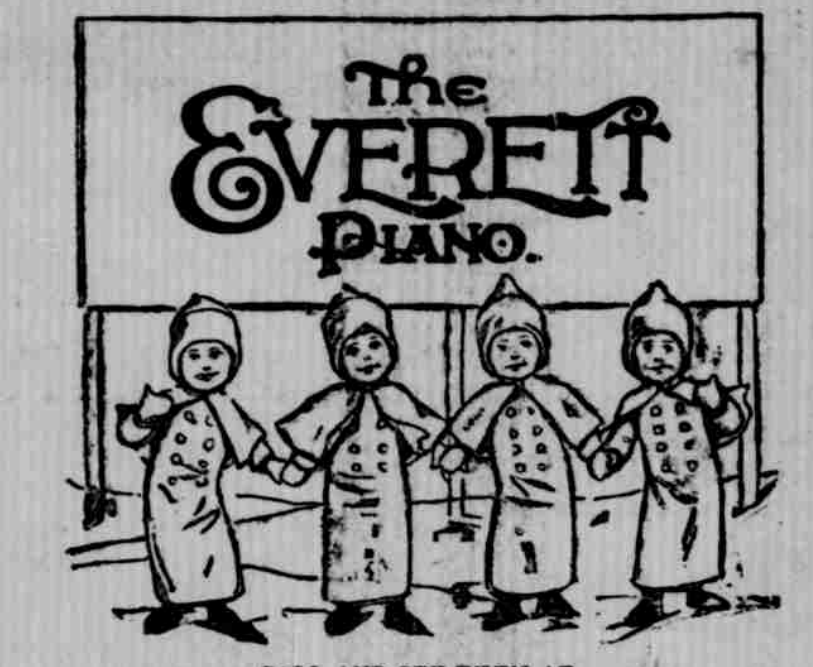
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